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By [Kristina Monillos](#)



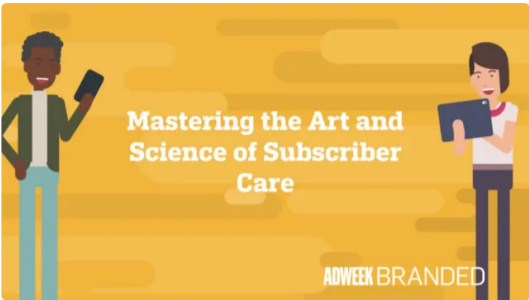
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POPSUGAR

Moms Demand Action's Founder Shares a Deceptively Simple Way You Can Combat Gun Violence

Aug 4 2019 - 12:05pm



To say that [Moms Demand Action](#) [1] founder Shannon Watts is dedicated doesn't quite capture it — just ask her family. During a recent phone conversation, the Fortune 500-exec-turned-gun-safety-advocate and mother of five admitted with a laugh: "My husband once said to me, 'Even if I had cancer, I would not spend as much time trying to get it treated as you are spending on gun violence, which you have never been impacted by.'"

Still, with studies suggesting that the [frequency of mass shootings in America is accelerating](#) [2] in recent years, it can be hard not to feel resigned to the notion that it's just a matter of time until an act of gun violence quite literally hits home. Who wasn't struck by [The New York Times'](#) headline that referenced [Kentucky being the site of the 11th school shooting of the year](#) [3] ... just 23 days into 2018? And how does Watts combat outrage fatigue at this pace of tragedy? "I have never felt fatigued," she insisted. "I am part of this huge network of women, and gun violence survivors — men, too — across the country who've joined us to help us fight the gun lobby and fight for stronger gun laws. When things like this happen, although it's devastating, it also quickly turns into anger." For Watts, the network of volunteers and advocates — and their many notable wins in recent years — instead offers her "a feeling of momentum."

Watts points out evidence of that momentum: that gun safety advocates have pushed to successfully pass laws in 25 states and the District of Columbia that work to disarm domestic abusers. That they've seen eight states move to require background checks on every form of gun sale since the Sandy Hook shooting. In 2018, one area of focus for Moms Demand Action and its partners is augmenting the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) system, ensuring it will alert law enforcement when people with criminal backgrounds attempt to purchase firearms.

During our conversation, Watts, who is also a board member of [Rise to Run](#) [4] and [Emerge America](#) [5], weighed in on why she believes women running for office is a "moral imperative," facing down trolls on social media to spread her message, and some startlingly simple — yet effective — ways everyday citizens can help push back against gun violence.

"When women get involved, things change."

POPSUGAR: What's one thing people can do to impact change — even on a local or neighborhood level?

Shannon Watts: Asking. Part of activism is asking a question, and then making your opinion known; whether about how someone stores their guns when you send your kids to a play date or a family member's house; whether it's asking when you're out grocery shopping if the place you're shopping at allows open carry. It's making sure you know when you send your kids to college if they go into a state with guns allowed on campus. It doesn't have to be a huge step like flying to Washington DC for a rally. It's sometimes the smaller things that are so important, because the more people that ask those questions, the more likely there is to be change.